

# **Educational Contexts, Education And Gender Identities Of Adolescents From A Rural Mayan Locality In Yucatán**

*Ella S. & Reid R.*

*Institute of Molecular Biology, University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this article was to compare and explore the gender identity of adolescent women from a Mayan rural locality, from two of their educational contexts: the telesecundaria school and daily life in the community. Interviews and participant observation were used to obtain qualitative primary data. Among the main findings, it is highlighted that the institutional structure and rigidity of the school limits the fact that adolescents can act at certain times from social attributes different from those offered by their locality. Likewise, the school contributed to the individualization of the participants and the ways to have foreign values as a desirable representation of “development”, aspects that do not contribute equally to the idea of “community” that is still present in this locality with Mayans and whose relationships are based on a sense of community. Finally, the education that is taught and produced in the school classroom responds to the objectives of technification and training of “citizen” women, who can play a role within the productive system, while educating them as women who maintain and ensure the traditional gender binary social order.

**Keywords** : gender identity; educational contexts; formal education; informal education; education.

## **1. Introduction**

In the eighties, research emerged on the role that formal education has in the education of machismo in men and women, from the open curriculum (subjects and study plans) and through a hidden curriculum: in the speeches, images and symbologies contained in books and, relevantly, in social representations, as well as in the collective imagination of teachers and officials involved in formal education (Acker, 2003). These studies discuss the category of gender from a Western vision, in which they do not necessarily take up other categories that exacerbate the gap between them and that appear in contexts such as indigenous ones.

In indigenous contexts, formal education presents characteristics that urgently need new approaches to the study of educational work that considers a gender perspective. In spaces such as school, discrimination and violence against women appears, not only because of their gender but also because they belong to an ethnic group, for living in a poorly urbanized environment and for having an income well below the average of places. considered developed (Rosales, 2014; Jiménez and Mendoza, 2016; Jiménez and Kreisel, 2018).

On the other hand, the construction of gender identity in educational and indigenous contexts has a significant number of questions to resolve. In Mexico, despite the fact that the gender perspective is found in practically all laws and educational programs, the question arises of why women who identify with an ethnic group continue to drop out of school and live in precarious economic conditions, as well as as being violated by their partners and community.

In the case of the adolescents in this article, they are constructed and are constructed as children at school and at home, with a gender identity that limits their performance in the modern social world, because they have a Mayan surname

and because they are considered poor. , among other characteristics considered of little value in modern society. These situations are frequently associated with the fact that women, usually, do not finish their schooling processes and are related to beliefs conveyed through speech and actions, expressions of patriarchy in which they are educated and that are activated daily. in the school classroom and in other educational spaces, reflecting on the gender identity of women in this stage of training.

Thus, education is not a process restricted to school spaces, it can also be understood as a social phenomenon extended beyond school and the official forms related to it (Trilla, 1993; Trilla et al., 2003 ). However, due to the interconnection between institutions, the dynamics in family and communal spaces, as well as in the mass media, also become, in part, organizational forms in this work (Zayas and Rodríguez, 2010). In this way, women construct their gender identity not only from the education they receive at school but also from the learning they experience in the spaces of daily life and in the institution itself through the hidden curriculum.

Regarding gender identity, this is in constant adaptation based on differentiation with the other and affirmation with oneself, presenting important crisis stages in adolescence, in which attributes can be formed that are consolidated or not for the rest of life (Erickson, 1968). “Human beings have certain potentialities and limitations that emerge during their lifespan that can be actualized at specific points in development, but only if environmental conditions facilitate it” (Côté and Levine, 2002, p. 104). Adding a component of social agency, feminism, recognizes the possibilities of women's change in gender identity: “feminine identity must be treated as a result of women's real experiences and as a possible construction” (Martínez, 1992 , p. 66). The participants are in adolescence, where they constantly

confront their educational systems of reference: school, community and family to express and form their dynamic gender identity. “During this period, the adolescent begins to experience a series of physical, emotional, behavioral, intellectual and social changes, which are necessary so that they can consolidate their identity and define the human being they will be” (Arroyo et al., 2014). , p. 4).

On the other hand, with respect to the study of the construction of identity in adolescents, it has frequently been studied from the autobiographical story, being a primary level of it, however, the present study focuses on the analysis of the socio-cultural level that It develops in the classroom and in the spaces of daily life of adolescent girls in relation to their gender identity (Côté and Levine, 2002).

## **2. Educational contexts and gender identity**

In the present work, the approach of educational contexts or types of education (Trilla et al., 2003) is taken up to illustrate how learning is situated in the context of the experiential experience of participation in the world, which is fundamentally a phenomenon social that reflects the condition of social beings capable of knowing, in such a way that the subjects are learners and also capable of teaching about social behavior in daily life (Bruner, 1997). Thus, each woman can be able to continually build and reconstruct herself, based on the education she receives and in which she participates in formal education (in the space of interaction that occurs within her) and in informal education.

Education, for its part, can be understood as a phenomenon, a social fact or a process (Durkheim, [1922] 1975, pp. 11-30) which, for the purposes of this discussion, is taken up as a process that consists of “ the transmission of knowledge, skills and norms of behavior so that new members can become part of their society” (Giddens and Sutton, 2015, p. 124). The origins of education date

back to the first social organizations, where adults instructed the youngest in tasks considered important for society, mainly through the oral narration of knowledge, principles and valued values. These knowledge, principles and valued values have changed with the transformation of society; in modernity these have an important relationship with the economic and productive system, a result of the establishment of the capitalist and neoliberal system as hegemony. In this way, education works from various systems that have as their intrinsic and explicit objective the formation of a modern subject at the service of productivity.

Currently, three types of education are recognized: formal, informal and non-formal, a classification that arises from the organizations that offer it and the objectives that each one pursues. Formal education is that which is regulated and certified by official bodies, non-formal education is knowledge that is offered to train in trades or other skills but does not have a certification, while informal education is that which occurs in the life of the individual apparently without a clear objective and all three are subdivisions of the educational system that develops in the broader process of socialization. Education in its entirety, “is a socialization... of the young generation” (Durkheim, [1922] 1975, p. 12).

Each type of education plays a specific and complementary role with respect to the other two in the formation of the individual and particularly their identity. Taken together and as deliberate and targeted education, it can transmit a type of knowledge, attitude or ideology towards an individual or a group of people, achieving desired or undesired and even undesirable results. One of them is the social reproduction of patriarchy, social inequality and its forms of discrimination and in which gender identity is configured, this is a position in the world that reproduces a certain social order.

In the present study, this assumption is relevant, since generally when the term “education” is referred to, it is related to the formal system of knowledge transmission. Formal education is the main institutionalized form of socialization, generated from the productive and labor needs of modern societies and in this characteristic lies the difference that is relevant to emphasize with respect to socialization.

The main difference between socialization and education is that, in the latter, societies or groups can have certain control over them, mainly over what they want to teach and learn and they have a clear training purpose. Although in socialization as an open system knowledge, values and principles are transferred, these may or may not oppose current social norms and functions, so it may be that individuals are in socialization processes, either as learners or recipients. without necessarily being educated or educated. Thus, education is an intentional and planned process even in informal education that takes place in the family and in the community. This argument becomes even more relevant in this work, since coloniality has tended to see families and communities as “socializing agents” when in reality they are institutions that offer organized and structured knowledge that forms individuals and that is possible thanks to to an informal educational process.

Taking this guideline, the family is an educational institution that leads the teaching of the identity of men and women. Thus, in the community or locality studied, families, community and school function as informal institutions that teach women to be and behave in a certain way and establish the limits of their personality and actions in the social world. These educations contain and transmit knowledge that can be transformative or conservative. In that sense, an individual

can learn and relearn various ways of being, through learning in formal and informal education.

The starting point is then the idea that education as a structured system in the classroom, as well as in informal systems, has a component that can limit the performance of individuals or be capable of releasing human potential through a configuration of the “ I”, that is, her "identity", which responds to the stimuli of the context, but also to the needs of each woman so that they can oppose the ways that are educated about how to "be a woman." In particular, in the case of the participating adolescents, it means the possibility of transforming attributes of their gender identity in educational spaces (Mejiuni, 2013). Therefore, we also sought to explore “the dynamic interrelationship that exists between identity and learning” (Zurlinden, 2010, p. 7) in formal and informal education.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 The study site**

The community analyzed is located in a town in the state of Yucatán (Mexico), where its population, according to INEGI (2015), occupies the second place where an indigenous language is most widely spoken. The community is part of what was for years the henequen zone, an agroindustry characterized by indigenous Mayan exploitation, in which the colonial hacienda system was maintained.

#### **3.2 Sample**

The sample selection was intentional based on criteria. According to Martínez-Miguélez (2006), this type of sample is chosen through a series of criteria that are considered necessary or highly convenient to have a unit of analysis with the greatest advantages for the purposes pursued by the research. 19 women between

the ages of twelve and 77 participated, as well as members of their families and the community.

The criteria that were chosen to select the participants in the study were the following and their order had a hierarchical level of importance:

a) The most significant criterion was that women were willing to participate and showed willingness and desire to do so. This was because constant and intense participation was required (several weeks and many hours) in order to recover the practices and discourses that affect their identity.

b) The total number of participants who were interviewed and observed were determined by the “saturation” criterion. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 12), this occurred when each new interview and observation did not provide additional information about the study categories.

### 3.3 Method

The study was qualitative in nature and was placed within the critical theory paradigm. In formal education, the discourses that are handled in the curriculum (specifically through textbooks) and that educate a patriarchal and colonial ideology were analyzed. This is because according to Habermas, language is a means of social domination. “To the extent that the legitimations of power relations are not articulated, language is also ideological” (Habermas, [1977] 1992, p. 259).

Likewise, in informal and also in formal education, social practice was analyzed from its material (actions) and abstract (language) part. According to Shove et al. (2012), practice is the manifestation of cognitive thinking that integrates an ideological and subjective part, manifests itself in an action (the material part) and is built through interaction with others. This ideology educates certain hegemonic



forms of thought and action on people, through the establishment of a common sense, “the ought to be” of things. In the present study, the socio-cultural discourses that have an impact on the gender identity of adolescents were analyzed, to demonstrate the hegemonic forms of “being a woman” that influence local women to a greater extent. The study of this practice was carried out through participant observation and interviews with the women. These techniques were used in the following way:

#### 3.4 Participant observation

Observation is a data collection technique in social research that can be carried out with different levels of approach to the object of study (Goetz and LeCompte, [1984] 1988, p. 126). When using an ethnographic method, as in the present research, participant observation was irreplaceable, since it was required to spend a long stay in the field and interact as much as possible with the events and those involved in them. Thus, the description and interpretation of the events was dense, achieved gradually in prolonged interactions with the participants, key informants and their contexts over three years.

#### 3.5 Interviews

Álvarez-Gayou, citing Steiner Kvale, develops ideas around the interview in qualitative research. The fundamental purpose of the latter is: “To obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee regarding the interpretation of the meanings of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1996, p. 6 cited by Álvarez-Gayou, 2010, p. 109). For his part, Martínez-Miguélez (2006) also refers to the interview in qualitative research and defines it as: “A technical instrument [...] that adopts a colloquial dialogue or semi-structured interview complemented, possibly, with

some chosen techniques.” [...] and according to the specific and peculiar nature of the research to be carried out” (p. 93).

Returning to these definitions, the interview was used as a process and a technique to delve deeper into the meanings that the participants give to what they do and what they are. Interviews were used to listen to women, not only or primarily as informants, but as human beings who individually and collectively reflect and can practice forms of resistance regarding their gender condition (Korol, 2007). Likewise, body postures, silences and gestures were recorded, which were an essential element of the subjective representation of what the participants perceived about themselves and their contexts and the informants perceived about their environments and the adolescents.

#### **4. Results**

##### **4.1 Informal education in the family and community and its influence on the gender identities of adolescent girls**

In the informal education developed in the community and the family, free motherhood, as a right and a faculty, is presented in a varied way in the gender identity of adolescent girls. In the case of motherhood, which is a traditional attribute of women, the idea of “having the children that God sends or wants” predominates. This belief is mainly promoted by the Catholic and evangelical churches within the community. The vehicle of this message is usually the sermons offered by pastors in Protestant churches or by the Catholic priest at mass. The message is reinforced in the catechism, in worship and other meetings organized by these religions. The oldest women in the community, who are mothers, have between five and eight daughters and sons, those of the next younger generation

have between three and five children, while the youngest adult women have between one and three children.

In the case of adolescent women who have a boyfriend and an active sexual life, their partners use male condoms (condoms) to prevent pregnancy. They do this on the recommendation of their mothers and grandmothers, there are even cases in which they also recommend abstinence as a means of preventing not only pregnancies but also sexually transmitted diseases. Some adolescents are aware of these diseases and some prefer not to have sex with their partners, taking intimate contact as an alternative. However, one community informant explained the following:

It has been unleashed that women get pregnant at an early age... because in the generation that I was in from that stage to those who come back, they were like thirteen-year-old pregnancies, fourteen-year-old girls, so there was that and it went like a replica, there was a tendency to be a “comadre”, if you already went, well I'm going now (sic), so there was even a group of women who got pregnant at an early age. Because moms and dads are not at home, who guides them ? Who are they going to talk to ? Who is going to see them in the day part? Because mom and dad come until late at night, the rest of the day they are alone, and I think that is the main problem that has arisen for years, since I was young, I have seen this situation replicated. (Informant, male, 27 years old)

The informant referred to the case of women who are mothers of local teenagers who frequently go out to work in domestic service or companies in the city. Some of them are single mothers and others are married or in a common law union.

Regarding clothing, the hipil or huipil was the characteristic dress of the mestizo woman, a product of the mixture of European and indigenous clothing. It was and

continues to be made with threads and fabrics that are expensive for women, despite the fact that there are different types of hipil, among which there are simpler ones that are painted, not embroidered. Younger women no longer use them because they are not practical for their daily lives. In this town, the hipil is no longer an identity badge for young women as it was for their mothers and grandmothers.

Within the community, women wear current fashionable clothing and speak in Mayan among themselves and with their families. When they speak Mayan, they do so in a very low tone, a characteristic in the use of the Mayan language that occurs frequently within the community. Two young women, one fourteen years old and the other fifteen, expressed that they understood Mayan but that they did not speak it because they felt “embarrassed” and only some mothers try to teach this language to their girls. The disuse of the “Maya” in the community has a consequence on the identity of the women of the community that distances them from the “Maya”, from their ethnic identity and brings them closer to the mestizo and from what it emerges. .

Sichra (2004) points out that speakers give value to their language based on the functionality that its use represents in daily life, which also has a manifestation of loyalty and belonging to certain social groups. In the case of adult and elderly women, it was observed that they speak both languages, Spanish and Mayan; a few speak only Mayan. The women learned Spanish at school and began to use it at school and in the city. The young adult women participants understood Spanish perfectly, however, the older ones found it difficult to speak it, on occasions, it was difficult for them to understand when they were conversed with and they answered with cut sentences, using adjectives, unconjugated verbs and sometimes without

use connectors. Likewise, with their families, they communicated using the Mayan language, which they speak fluently. For their part, the younger women spoke more in Spanish than in Mayan in the community and when speaking the latter language, they did so with a certain shyness.

#### 4.2 Gender identities of adolescent girls in telesecundaria school

The telesecundaria school is located in the center of the community. Most of the adolescent girls in the community attend this school, to whom this grade corresponds. Some adolescents go to school in the neighboring community, because of the idea that their parents have that the educational level is “better.”

Gender differences are seen, first, in the number of students in each classroom. In the first grade, nine boys and one girl were identified; in the second grade, five boys and five girls and in the third three girls and six boys. There are five teachers on campus, three in front of the group, two men and one woman, one teacher who is the director of the school and a new teacher who is originally from the neighboring community. Teachers have different opinions about the number of girls in the institution. One of them commented: “In previous years, there were an equal number of boys and girls in the classrooms, but it's normal, they leave, every day there is more equality, let's say... equity between men and women, there are no important differences between men and women”. However, another teacher stated that:

It is common for girls in the community to not continue studying due to the “customs” that exist in the community. Girls become pregnant at an early age or drop out of school because their parents are not there, since they are always working. Then they get into drugs or start experimenting with their sexuality at an early age. (Teacher, 30 years old, interview, November 16, 2019)

Dropping out of school due to the absence of parents is something confirmed by a key informant from the community, a problem that is also compounded by the lack of financial resources to continue studying. A teenager in an interview stated:

I was thinking about studying beauty culture... my mother told me that the community is small and that there are not many people that I have to paint or do their hair, since there are few and there are almost never parties, well, although it would help me me and for my family... but I'm confused. (Alejandra, student, 14 years old)

This teenager's mother works as a domestic worker in private homes in the city almost all day, like most mothers of teenagers in the community. This occupation was also carried out by their grandmothers, who continued doing this work after their liberation from the henequen haciendas, which had a system of exploitation in which Mayan women were married and forced to work and live in these productive centers (Peniche, 1987). This is a past that is remembered with sadness and about which the grandmothers of the teenagers speak little to their families, but which is known by its inhabitants.

Adolescent girls speak Spanish to communicate and behave with the attributes traditionally assigned to women, inside and outside the classrooms. During recess, the girls are people who coexist. In their interactions, they unite by affinity with other classmates, who become friends or colleagues, not only at school but also this relationship is reproduced in the community. During the break, they group together with other women or male colleagues, sit in a place to eat, talk and drink a soda, exchange gestures, looks and messages with each other and speak little. One of the teenagers talks more than the others, she is more open in interactions with her classmates. However, she has a greater social relationship with men, with

whom she hugs, laughs and makes jokes. This teenager gave the following testimony in this regard:

I like to get along more with boys than with girls, even if they say I'm crazy [sic].... I only have one friend... because then the girls do things to you and they act like nothing happened.... (Alejandra, 14 years old)

The gender identity of this adolescent, in particular, is related to an attempt to distance herself from her sister's gender identity, with which she has been constructed differently, based on the informal education received at home. Alejandra described herself as “cheerful” and “relaxed” and her sister as “rebellious” and “her parents' darling.” Her sister, who two years ago finished her studies at the community's telesecondary school and began studying a technical career in the city, showed herself to have a gender identity that is different from that of the community, since it is used by afternoons and expressed a desire to study and continue preparing for formal education (informal conversation, September 15, 2019). Alejandra and her sister understand the Mayan language but hardly speak it in the community and at school, only in some private interactions with her mother and family.

Alejandra and her classmates in the telesecundaria have an approach that is mediated by the teachers. In the classrooms they talk little about their personal affairs, they prefer to go out for a walk in the large school yard, where they are not seen or heard by the teachers. This situation is repeated in the community, hiding from adults to talk. The adolescents hardly speak and rarely discuss their situations with their neighbors. A teenager commented in an interview: “When I'm sad I cry, but I go to the bathroom, I don't want my parents to see me or ask me” (interview, November 20, 2019). This behavior was reported in the classroom; likewise, the

interactions between the adolescents are not very affectionate, there is almost no physical contact (a pat on the arm, a hug or laughter). A serious and formal appearance was observed in the adolescents, a behavior that could also be identified in adult women during their interaction in the community.

On the other hand, the teachers' testimonies during the investigation were limited, that is, they stated that teaching occurs satisfactorily in the classrooms and they spoke little about the problems facing the institution. Teachers are perfectly aware of the problems that students go through, which are related to the hostile and limited conditions in which teachers have had to function and work in Mexico (Ayala, 2017).

People who in Mexico study a teaching career or a teaching degree, if they wish to teach in the telesecundaria sector, must meet a series of requirements, such as having a formal curriculum and competing for a vacancy before the Secretariat of Public Education (interview, April 15, 2018). If they are eligible for a position, teachers perform administrative functions that are added to their teaching work.

In telesecundaria, almost all teachers are in this better hiring situation, since the service is designed to operate with one teacher per grade, and the size of these schools is relatively small; Furthermore, it is common for teachers not only to carry out training tasks, but also to be in charge of running the school. (Degante et al., 2015, p. 56)

It was observed that the number of adolescent girls decreases as the school grade increases and among the students, there are serious deficiencies in reading and mathematical comprehension, a problem that the informants reported, the adolescents bring with them from the primary level. In an informal conversation on November 19, 2019, one of the reporting teachers stated that a first-year high



school student did not know how to read, which is why it is difficult for her to understand the contents that the SEP established for that grade. This is a case that is repeated in the other salons, but with less severity. Some students do not have the basic knowledge of arithmetic to be able to learn algebra that corresponds to high school grades. This could be seen in the notes in their notebooks, where out of five exercises they managed to solve yes to case two. There are some students who want to improve, but the teachers are unable to cover all the deficiencies that the students bring from previous grades. Likewise, there is little involvement of the adolescent girls' families in their formal education.

On the other hand, teachers who interact in the classroom with adolescents are models of identity within the school, which functions as an identity learning space for adolescents. In this sense, the adolescents find themselves within an intercultural space, in which part of the teachers (two) promote indigenous identity as a positioning and part of gender identity, which can be traced by their language (they speak Mayan). and belong to an indigenous community (they are from a neighboring Mayan community), while the other two partially understand the Mayan language. These situations give rise to processes of confrontation between what they have been taught in their communities and what the school is teaching them in their interaction, about how to be a woman.

It is notable that adolescent girls are transforming their social identity as a secondary level of their gender identity, by giving a new meaning to their social belonging in the world, both through behavioral models and through the discourse that permeates them daily in books. and those that occur during their interaction with their peers and other actors. They know they are part of a nation, but the ambivalent and sometimes contradictory use of interactions and meanings that

occur at school and in their community produce many uncertainties about their place in that nation. The social positions that the students take are the product of the mixture and confrontations of cultural meanings, which bring with them the ideologies of class, gender and race that do not appear well defined in the informal and formal educational space.

The discourse, for its part, is also a transmitter and producer of identity traits, which the interlocutors in the educational and interaction space can exchange, as long as they are present within their intelligible framework, that is, the choices of the social positioning of girls are produced by virtue of the identifications that they understand. In this sense, language occupies a fundamental place in the understanding and adoption of these identifications. In the classrooms, the language that demarcates these identifications is Spanish and this language is actually the producer of the identifications that adolescent girls are accepting more frequently as part of their gender identity (Côté and Levine, 2002), because they are valued as positive in school since formal education began to exist in the town and also in interaction with the community, although not in the same way as the Mayan language.

Thus, in the classroom, adolescent girls frequently choose to be students, friends, classmates and women, but not to be Mayan, because the discourse or the space are not configured or configured to teach this identity, so that adolescents learn this social position. and ethnic identification as part of their gender identity. However, sometimes, with teachers who move and position themselves from the Mayan ethnic identity, they also decide to be Mayan, carrying and taking this identity to other spaces such as work as an expression of resistance and permanence in the face of the positions offered to them by the Modern society. The adolescents in this

study have learned to speak Spanish and Mayan as a strategy to be and interact in the formal and informal educational space; however, they construct their gender identity based on the gender and class structures that, from the past, have strongly shaped the identities of women in rural spaces. It was observed that the formal educational space is not allowing women to have other interactions and generate new meanings about being a woman that contribute to their personal and political development, which is expressed in women who speak and express their feelings, proud women. of their appearance and ethnicity, organized in social movements and women that do not allow mistreatment and violence towards them in its various forms.

On the other hand, the educational program used in the telesecundaria, which corresponds to that established for that level of studies by the SEP, does not include subjects that aim to learn the Mayan language or the roots of its culture. The subjects taught in the three grades are: Spanish, Mathematics, Physics, Civics and Ethics and History (Government of Mexico, 2020). A second language is taught, but it is English. In this sense, the assimilation and homogenization policies with which Mexico has treated indigenous peoples since its formation as a State (Jiménez and Kreisel, 2018; Vázquez, 2018) are once again observed. The formal education of the telesecundaria corresponds to the philosophical principles that govern the Mexican educational system, which are oriented towards literacy in the Spanish language and the formation of a certain type of modern citizen, who focuses his efforts on personal development, with knowledge basics about some areas of technology.

Likewise, this education is having a result in the formation of the gender identity of adolescents, as people who speak Spanish and English. Most teenage girls listen to

music in English, as well as trendy songs on the international music charts. At school they wear the uniform, but when they leave school, they change their clothes and dress in jeans or shorts, t-shirts, some of them put on makeup or dye their hair blonde or colored locks. Hegemonic beauty stereotypes are influencing women's identities and the school has a role in reinforcing the idea of beauty that prevails in modern societies in Mexico.

## **5. Discussion and conclusions**

The informal and formal education that adolescent girls receive has a similar consequence on their gender identity. Both educations educate them with a behavior similar to that of the older women of the town: with little schooling, but with the difference that now the majority does not speak Mayan. The school influenced this formation of identity through the curricular contents and the interactions that it encouraged and those that it did not encourage, among adolescents. The institutional structure and rigidity limit that adolescent girls can act at certain times from social attributes other than those they learn in their community. It is clear that the school has been the main educational agent through which adolescents have learned Spanish and through which they try to add to their identity, the attribute of international citizenship with the English subject that is taught to them. These educations have in some ways strengthened the idea that “what is external” is better, that speaking English and Spanish is preferable to speaking Mayan.

Likewise, they understand the Mayan language because their mothers taught them, but they do not use it frequently. This happens for several reasons: because the school promotes the use of the Spanish language and not the Mayan language, because there is a certain shame about its use that they have learned and because

Western culture seems to be accepted by adolescents. In this sense, it is pointed out that not speaking Mayan, which is related to the gender identity that women are and have formed, can be interpreted from two angles: as a manifestation of the historical discrimination that the community has suffered and as an eminent consequence of the acculturation processes that this site has experienced.

Although the category of ethnicity with which the Mayan has been associated in the community has had an effect on the disuse of their language by women, it is also true that they have been able to choose whether to use it or not, the question is: To what extent have they been able to choose? Or rather it has been that they have had no choice and have only adapted to the characteristics presented to them by the spaces with which they have to interact daily: the school, the home, the community and eventually, the city. The answer is that both processes have had to do with it, both the discrimination experienced by women and their families, as well as the adaptation they have made of themselves, in this case, speaking Spanish to be able to interact and communicate at school and in the community. city, the reasons why the use of this language has been decreasing in the community. Ironically, globalization and neoliberalism are the platforms that allow the production of discourses and practices in spaces and that encourage the search for similarity and difference with others, the continuous and dynamic confrontation of gender identity in the subject. modern, in the contemporary Mayan woman.

Thus, it is found, for example, that, during interactions between adolescent girls, as they learn to “be a woman” in formal education, their ethnic identity as a social part of their gender identity is weakened. Likewise, the behavior of the teachers, as well as the institution's curriculum, also weakens this ethnic identity and has a minor impact on their gender identity, unlike the influence that the behaviors of the

members of their community and the education that they have. receive at home and other informal means about their identity as a woman.

Likewise, the school contributed to the individualization of the participants. The values promoted by the institution correspond to the idea of building a nation that individualizes the students, which trains them to have international (the English language), hegemonic scientific knowledge and knowledge as a desirable representation of "development", and that does not necessarily contribute to the idea of "community" that is present in the locality, that is, that has a sense of community as the basis of its relations, despite the cultural exchange that it has maintained with other societies and/or communities. However, this does not necessarily mean that women have been constructed from this reference point, with which, in the words of one informant, essentially "peace" is sought. Adolescent girls, despite the cultural exchange they have had in formal education, generally continue to be constructed as fearful, silent women and objects of various attacks. In this sense, the need arises to explore spaces where women can learn, share, experience the production of new meanings about being a woman, where they can rethink and redefine their ethnic and generic belonging and that allows them to express their gender identity in a positive, which translates into their personal and collective growth.

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